DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 730 RC 020 519

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TITLE	Aboriginal Language Maintenance, Development, and Enhancement: A Review of Literature.
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	20p.; In: Stabilizing Indigenous Languages; see RC 020 517.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*American Indian Education; *American Indian Languages; American Indians; Bilingual Education; *Canada Natives; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Eskimo Aleut Languages; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Indigenous Populations; *Language Maintenance; Language Usage; Literature Reviews; *Native Language Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	Canada; Endangered Languages; *Language Policy; United States

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a general review of literature relating to the maintenance, development, and enhancement of Aboriginal languages in North America, particularly Canada. Drawing primarily on sociolinguistics, several concepts about language usage and change are outlined that are useful for the purposes of thinking about language maintenance. Next, the current status of Aboriginal languages in Canada is considered through census figures and other broad data, national surveys of factors that influence language change and maintenance, scales of language vitality, and comparisons with recent immigrant language groups in North America. Finally, sources are examined that outline strategies for Aboriginal language maintenance. These include sources covering language values and support for endangered languages, general guidance on language retention and renewal, general policies and program provisions in schools, descriptions of specific bilingual and native language programs, teachers and their training, research and evaluation, development of instructional materials, literacy in Aboriginal languages, orthography development, Aboriginal language development in family and community settings, and Aboriginal language maintenance in other countries. Contains 80 references. (SV)

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Aboriginal Language Maintenance, Development, and Enhancement: A Review of Literature[1]

Barbara Burnaby

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This paper offers a general review of literature relating to the maintenance, development, and enhancement of Aboriginal languages in North America, especially Canada. Following current Canadian practice, the term 'Aboriginal languages' will refer to the descendants of those languages that were spoken in North America before the coming of Europeans. It is comparable to the terms 'Native American languages' in the United States, and 'indigenous languages' in Latin America. I start with an outline of several concepts, mostly from sociolinguistics, that are useful for the purposes of thinking about language maintenance. Next, the current status of Aboriginal languages in Canada is considered through census figures and other broad data, indicators of factors that influence language change, scales of language vitality, and comparisons with recent immigrant language groups in North America. Then, there is a longer section on matters relating directly to interventions for active maintenance of Aboriginal languages. The main topic is language in education, but other areas are touched on such as Aboriginal people's values concerning their ancestral languages, policies on minority languages, literacy in Aboriginal languages, and community activities for language development. Finally, the situation of Aboriginal languages outside of North America is reviewed.

Concepts about Language Change

When many speakers of two or more languages are in regular and significant contact, it is likely over time that the speakers and the languages will change in some way. Both languages might hold their own; one might give way entirely or partially to the other; or a new

[1]This review was originally written to focus extensively on issues relating to a specific group of Canadian Aboriginal languages. For present purposes, the text has been considerably condensed and aimed at issues that might concern any of North America's Aboriginal languages. Because space is limited here, only the basic gist of topics and publications is given, with maximum attention to references that could be pursued further by readers to follow up on their own questions. For the full presentation see New Economy Development Group. (1993). *Evaluation of the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal languages of the Northwest Territories*. Ottawa: Author.

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language may be formed. Bratt Paulston (1986, pp.123-125) gives three examples of types of situations in which two languages are maintained in one community over time, but she says that "Maintained group bilingualism is unusual" (p. 121). According to Fishman (1976, p. 110), "No society needs or has two languages for the same functions. As a result, no society, not even those whose bilingualism has been most widespread and most stable, raises its children with two mother tongues." It is through the bilingualism of individuals and their changes in behavior that languages as a whole change. Shift from one language to another is more common than long-term maintenance of two languages depending on social conditions, attitudes, and values in the situation (Bratt Paulston 1986, p. 121, 124). Factors such as marriage between people from the two groups, geographic moves of speakers (especially away from isolated communities), small numbers of speakers of one language, general domination of one group by another, and many others are often thought to contribute to the shift from one language to another, but generalizations about the effects of such factors is risky (Fishman, 1976, pp. 121-140, 179).

Individuals' language behavior and use of a language may change, but the language itself may change as well, for example in its sound system, vocabulary, and/or grammar (Weinreich, 1968). One possibility is the formation of a new language, like Michif from French and Cree. Some languages may be eroded slowly by another through borrowing of vocabulary and grammatical deterioration (e.g., Mailhot (1985) on Montagnais; Miller (1971) on Shoshoni). However, some languages may resist borrowings (e.g., Basso (1967) on Apache). 'Indian English,' that is, forms of English produced by Aboriginal/English contact, shows a kind of shift in English (e.g., Nelson-Barber, 1982; Miller, 1982; Fleischer, 1982; Leap, 1982b; Darnell, 1993).

Finally, it should be noted that when languages are in the process of shifting, especially if one language looks as if it will not survive, people associated with the languages in question tend to take passionate attitudes to them (Bratt Paulston, 1986, p. 120). Therefore, one can expect highly polarized rhetoric, and contradictions between rhetoric and actual behavior in the language communities in question. Skutnabb-Kangas (1986) casts doubt on interpretations of research data on minority education because of researchers' polarized views on the matter.

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Levels of Aboriginal Language Maintenance

Numbers of Speakers

A general sense of the degree to which Aboriginal languages are being maintained in North America can be gleaned from numbers collected through national censuses and surveys. Up to the 1980s, numbers of speakers of individual Aboriginal languages in North America had only been calculated on the basis of linguists' estimates (e.g., Chafe, 1965; Foster, 1982). Since 1981, the Canadian census has categorized individual Aboriginal languages separately rather than under the two previous headings of Amerindian and Inuit. An analysis of the 1981 census data by Burnaby and Beaujot (1986) showed that a number of Canada's approximately 60 Aboriginal languages probably had as few as 100 speakers, and that only Cree, Ojibwa, and Inuktitut had more than 10,000 speakers. The most shocking comparison was the historical percentages of Aboriginal people who had an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue. In 1951 it was 87.4 per cent, but in 1981 it was just 29.3 per cent.

In 1991, Statistics Canada (1993) conducted a special national survey of Aboriginal peoples in which detailed language questions were asked. It indicated that 36 per cent of adults surveyed (over age 15) and 21 per cent of children spoke an Aboriginal language. Fifty-one percent of adults and 71 per cent of children reported never having spoken an Aboriginal language (Table 2.1).

In 1990, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) published the results of a language survey it conducted by getting estimates from community leaders on a rationalized sample of First Nations (in effect, Indian reserves). It showed 48 per cent of the individuals in these locations to be fluent speakers of an Aboriginal language. Individual languages were ranked on a 'state of health' scale. In 1988-89, the Saskatchewan Indigenous Languages Committee (1991) and the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre conducted a door-to-door sociolinguistic survey of 20 selected communities with significant Aboriginal populations in Saskatchewan. It showed the Aboriginal languages in only three of the communities to be in good health. The 1991 Statistics Canada, the AFN, and the Saskatchewan surveys collected data on language use and resources as well as speaker fluency. Data from censuses and surveys are problematic because of sampling and analysis issues as well as the fact that they report on what people **think** about their own and others' language use rather than on direct and systematic observation of language in use.[1] However, while the

[1] See Krauss in this monograph for a discussion of the state of denial that some groups are with regard to the immanent demise of their native language.

numerical results of all these studies were somewhat inconsistent, the trends concerning language maintenance and loss were similar.

National Surveys of Language Maintenance

What kinds of factors seem to influence the loss or maintenance of Aboriginal languages? Findings from the Burnaby and Beaujot (1986) study of census figures indicate the greatest maintenance of Aboriginal language "among people who live in isolated, small communities and who tend not to change their place of residence. Historical length of [Euro-Canadian] contact with Aboriginal people as indicated by east-west or north-south location does not seem to be as strong a factor; for example, Nova Scotia shows higher Aboriginal language maintenance than the Yukon" (p. x). Higher Aboriginal language use is related to lower education, those not in the labor force, and those with lowest incomes. Also, women show less Aboriginal language maintenance than men (pp. x-xi). The AFN (1990) survey suggests that Aboriginal languages are most maintained in isolated communities and those with larger populations. Communities close to urban centers and small rural communities had the lowest Aboriginal language retention.

In terms of language maintenance efforts, these figures are important in indicating priorities for maintenance action (e.g., first or second language emphasis) in individual communities and areas. Given the overwhelming shift towards English (and towards French in parts of Quebec), it seems imperative to work hard even on Cree, Inuktitut, and Ojibwa, since it seems that all Aboriginal languages are at risk.

Scales of Aboriginal Language Vitality

The fact that many North American Aboriginal languages have declined significantly and that some have become extinct in this century has prompted linguists to develop scales indicating the vitality of languages. Wick Miller (1972) classified languages as flourishing, obsolescing, obsolete, or dead. Each level has characteristics relating to whether the children learn the language, what adults speak among themselves in various settings, and how many native speakers there are left. Bauman (1980) created a five level scale describing languages as flourishing, enduring, declining, obsolescing, and extinct. He added factors such as literacy in the Aboriginal language, and the adaptability of the language to new conditions. Bauman's scale has been adapted for use in classifying the health of Aboriginal languages in surveys such as the AFN and Saskatchewan surveys described above. In order to apply such scales, one needs not only numbers of speakers, but also the age of speakers, functions of Aboriginal languages and English in the community, indicators of adaptability of the Aboriginal language to changing contexts, and the role of Aboriginal literacy in the community. Conducting a survey to include all these factors adds

considerably to the complexity and expense of the data collection and analysis.

Maintenance of Languages Compared

It is clear that Aboriginal groups in North America have maintained their languages to a greater extent than any of the immigrant groups other than English, French, or Spanish speaking. That there are still speakers of most of the original Aboriginal North American languages is impressive testimony to their ability to survive. Most immigrant groups stop using their ancestral languages after two or three generations despite the fact that many are supported by incoming immigrants. Bratt Paulston (1981, p. 476), using a model based on Schermerhorn (1970), accounts for this by describing Aboriginal populations as being in a relationship with the majority society of "forced assimilation with resistance" which tends toward conflict.

Leap (1981) and Wardhaugh (1983) provide detailed descriptions of the history of U.S. and Canadian Aboriginal languages (respectively) in relation to the contemporary development of other languages. According to logic and various historical accounts, the Aboriginal populations and the newcomers with whom they shared the continent were not greatly different with respect to the dynamics of non-English language maintenance, formal European-style education, and literacy in English and their minority languages until the late 1800s or even well into the 1900s. Walker (1981), using literacy as a focus, gives a sense of how the power balance between the Anglo majority and many Aboriginal groups might have changed during the past 150 years or so.

Active Strategies for Aboriginal Language Maintenance

Values and Support for Endangered Languages

Fishman (1989, p. 401) says that "Language policy on behalf of endangered languages must assure the intimate vernacular [home and personal] functions first, and, if possible, go on from there, slowly building outward from the primary [e.g., home] to the secondary [e.g., community and perhaps workplace] institutions of intergenerational mother-tongue continuity." The extent to which forces (e.g., economic) in the majority society conflict with this priority is important. By pointing out that there are always other considerations than the minority language issues at hand, Fishman puts his finger on the inherent tensions in minority language maintenance situations.

There are a number of sources which indicate that many Aboriginal people think that the maintenance of Aboriginal languages is central to the expression of Aboriginal cultures (e.g., Cassidy, 1992, pp. 10-11). However, there are also indications that people in Aboriginal communities are torn or ambivalent about the value of Aboriginal

language maintenance programs (e.g., Saskatchewan Indigenous Languages Committee, 1991, pp. 156, 186; Assembly of First Nations, 1990, p. 27; Shkilnyk, 1986, pp. 45, 77; Leap, 1981, p. 138). Policies and attitudes in the majority society have actively repressed Aboriginal languages or at least have made adults feel that their language is at best useless or at worst a deterrent to education and employment. The creation of a sense that there is a one-to-one tradeoff between English and the Aboriginal languages is greatly problematic.

Three Texts on Aboriginal Language Renewal

Three texts have provided general guidance on Aboriginal language retention in the U.S. They are Bauman's *A guide to issues in Indian language retention* (1980), Leap's "American Indian languages" chapter in Ferguson and Brice Heath's *Language in the U.S.A.* (1981) and St. Clair and Leap's collection of articles, *Language renewal among American Indian tribes: Issues and problems* (1982). Bauman's book includes his scale of language vitality mentioned above. He also stresses having realistic goals, the self-esteem value of Aboriginal language study even in situations where the language is dying (see also Dorian, 1987), the need for parents to speak the language to children, and the essential role of community in creating and implementing policies. Leap describes various kinds of Aboriginal language programs, talks about contradictions in policies, and stresses the need for basic language research, functional writing systems, staff training, teaching materials, and evaluation. The St. Clair and Leap book provides context specific examples of issues and solutions that have come up in various actual Aboriginal language programs. All three of these texts point out that each program is unique to its setting and should be designed to fit its context.

Aboriginal Language Renewal and Schooling

General Policies and Program Provisions

Explicit initiatives for Aboriginal language maintenance and renewal end up in schools more often than in any other place. From an international perspective, Churchill's (1986) study of educational policies for linguistic and cultural minorities in the 25 countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) permits us a view of how Aboriginal languages are treated generally in many different countries. Compared with 'established minorities' (e.g., Acadian French in the U.S. or Welsh in Great Britain), or 'new minorities' (e.g., immigrant groups in North America), 'indigenous peoples' (e.g., Samit in northern Europe, Australian Aboriginal peoples, Maoris and Pacific Islanders in New Zealand, Native Americans, and others) come out very low in the six level scale Churchill developed on problem definition in educational policy for

linguistic and cultural minorities. He says "the analysis concluded that the particular problems of indigenous peoples are among those most poorly dealt with in all jurisdictions" (p. 153). He continues "The problems of indigenous peoples stand out as the most intractable faced by education today. Priority should be given to the study of their needs, placing emphasis on their own role in defining their own needs" (p. 164). In another paper based on the same data, Churchill (1987) sees issues of indigenous groups, along with race, religion, and sex, as "areas of taboo" in public policy discussion. Corson (1992), incorporating Churchill's six point scale, fleshes out the scale on the dimension of racial injustice issues in educational programs for Aboriginal peoples and others in a number of countries. He strongly advocates community control of language and educational policies. Burnaby (1980) and Tschantz (1980) describe historical policy development relevant to Aboriginal languages in Canada.

Two recent studies provide an overall picture of the numbers and characteristics of Aboriginal language programs in schools in Canada. The most comprehensive is a survey on Aboriginal education in general by the Canadian Education Association using a sample of all reserve schools and about 500 provincial schools (Kirkness & Bowman, 1992). Overall, about one-third reported teaching an Aboriginal language, with higher levels in reserve schools and lower in provincial schools depending largely on proportions of Aboriginal students in the school. Reserve schools tended to start Aboriginal language teaching as early as pre-school, and the general tendency in all schools was to stop teaching it by grade eight. Only four per cent of the sample used an Aboriginal language (mostly Inuktitut in the Northwest Territories) as language of instruction (pp. 43-44).

The second survey was the AFN Aboriginal language survey (1990) mentioned above. It related only to reserve schools and communities. In addition to school statistics, comparable to those of Kirkness and Bowman, it included reports of community viewpoints such as the wish to have the Aboriginal language taught through secondary school, for the language to have the same standing and accreditation in the school as French, for better and more traditional teaching methods, for integration with other Aboriginal cultural teaching, for the involvement of elders, for the goal to be real fluency, and for more materials and better trained instructors (pp. 35-37). About 80 per cent of communities in which the Aboriginal language was flourishing or enduring had Aboriginal language school programs, but only about 20 per cent of those communities in which the language was doing the worst had language programs (p. 35). The report also states that "Where Aboriginal language is the primary language of instruction the goal is one of transition to the official language rather than maintenance of the mother tongue" (p. 33). Finally, from a

question about where in the community the Aboriginal language was used, it was found that the school was the place the Aboriginal language was used **the least**, even in those communities that had flourishing Aboriginal languages (p.33). Also, the report concludes that "The fact that [Aboriginal] languages are not used in most of the communities surveyed effectively negates efforts of language personnel" (p. 37).

In sum, there is a lot of activity in Aboriginal language programming in schools for Aboriginal children, but the patterns of provision reinforce Churchill's (1986) findings that policies for indigenous groups are largely at the lower levels of his scale of policy development if most programs are for the youngest children, only for a few years, inadequately funded, and if even bilingual programs are seen to be transitional to fluency in the majority language. Although there are many more programs available now than in 1980, the current survey data would give the same impression as Clarke and MacKenzie (1980a) got in their survey of Aboriginal language programs in 1980, namely that Aboriginal language programs give only lip service to pluralist approaches and that they are assimilationist in intent.

Descriptions of Specific Programs

A moderate amount of documentation exists on Aboriginal language programs in schools in individual communities and regions. Phillips (1985) discussed educational programs policies and funding for the Canadian provinces (but not territories) in a study more widely focused on Aboriginal language retention. Csapo and Clarke (n.d.) surveyed Aboriginal language programs in British Columbia, Howard (1983) in the Northwest Territories, and Shkilnyk (1986) provides a great deal of information on Aboriginal language activities in schools and communities across Canada. Regarding programs specifically for children who come to school speaking an Aboriginal language, Rosier and Holm (1980) report on a Navajo medium program, Stairs (1985, 1988a) on ones in Inuktitut, and Kirkness (1976) on Cree programs. Theoretical frameworks for Montagnais (in Quebec) and Cree (in Ontario) medium programs are given by Drapeau (1983) and Faries (1989, 1991) respectively. Burnaby, Nichols, and Toohey (1980) discuss survey results from Cree and Ojibwa speaking communities in Ontario with recommendations on both Aboriginal languages and English in the schools. Programs using an Aboriginal language as medium of instruction for children who do **not** speak it (immersion programs) are discussed by Shkilnyk regarding Mohawk (1986, pp. 61-62), and Battiste regarding Micmac (1987). Fredeen (1988) outlines a model for Cree immersion in Saskatchewan.

Teachers and Their Training

The AFN 1990 survey discussed the planning and resources context for Aboriginal language programs in schools on reserves, and noted lack of funding, trained instructors, and curriculum and materials as the greatest problems (p. 22). Paynter and Sanderson (1991) show how provincial educational authorities can work with Aboriginal organizations in training Aboriginal language teachers. Stairs (1988b) discusses complex issues surrounding training and support for Aboriginal teachers who will work in schools which aim to attend to both mainstream and Aboriginal values and language. Comprehensive surveys of Aboriginal teacher education were conducted by More (1980), who was generally optimistic, and Clarke and MacKenzie (1980b), who were more pessimistic about the results. Implications for Aboriginal language teacher training appear in many of the articles in Burnaby (1985).

Research, Materials, and Evaluation

Lickers (1988) gives the steps necessary to ground Aboriginal language program policy in the necessary research. Bauman (1980, p. 46) and Leap (1981, p. 143) discuss background research and development that are necessary as a basis for Aboriginal language materials. It was emphasized in the AFN 1990 survey report (p. 26) that Aboriginal language teachers, who usually cannot network among themselves, have to create most of their materials themselves and are therefore always stressed for resources. A few examples of Aboriginal language materials development strategies are: using fluent speakers to create reading materials for a school program (Mitchell 1985); using local leadership to mobilize community resource people to help with an Aboriginal language immersion program (Shkilnyk, 1986, p. 61); and incorporating culturally appropriate behaviors into materials and teaching strategies for Aboriginal children (Leavitt, 1991; Stairs, 1991).

With respect to Aboriginal program evaluation, More (1984) and Hébert (1987) emphasize, among other things, the need for special methodologies and sensitivity to the goals and contexts of the community. Ahenakew (1988) and Leap (1981) specifically discuss the importance of evaluation in Aboriginal language education. As for evaluation of individual student progress in Aboriginal language programs, Manuel-Dupont (1987) gives a thorough review of language assessment literature in general and to contextual issues in Aboriginal education but does not mention measures that would be required if the children's Aboriginal language proficiency were to be evaluated. Bauman (1980, p. 45), on the other hand, gives general guidance for student assessment in the Aboriginal language.

Literacy in Aboriginal Languages

A writing system of some sort has been developed for virtually all Aboriginal languages in North America, but most only in the past century or so. Walker (1981) provides an overview of such systems with an emphasis on those that were created or widely adopted by Aboriginal groups. Burnaby and MacKenzie (1985) and Shearwood (1987) describe Aboriginal and mainstream languages used in Aboriginal community contexts. Zaharlick (1982) points out that there is controversy in some Aboriginal communities concerning whether the Aboriginal language should be written at all, as well as whether Aboriginal languages should be used in schools. She notes that proponents of writing in Aboriginal languages see one of its values to be the preservation of the languages (p. 44).

The AFN's 1990 survey on Aboriginal languages, based on estimates by community leaders and from only a sample of communities, reports seven percent Aboriginal language literates among the total population surveyed with about 38 per cent literacy among fluent speakers of Aboriginal languages (p. 21). Seventy per cent of the communities surveyed said that they had access to a writing system; seven per cent said that they did not know whether they did or not. The 1991 national survey (Statistics Canada, 1993, Table 2.1) found that 36 per cent of adults fluent in an Aboriginal language were literate in that language. Adult Inuktitut speakers were reported as over 90 per cent literate, while speakers of other languages showed much lower levels. Data on types of media used, writing as well as reading literacy, and who taught the skills was provided.

Academic literature contains many discussions on the technical aspects of orthography development for Aboriginal languages. Bauman (1980, p. 46) points out that many such academic writing systems are not practical for community use. A collection of articles on the implementation of Aboriginal language orthographies in Canada (Burnaby 1985) covers a wide range of issues on making writing systems really useful in Aboriginal communities. Most training programs for Aboriginal language teachers in Canada have a strong component in them on literacy for the language teachers (Hilbert & Hess, 1982). In Quebec, there was for a number of years a program that trained fluent speakers of Aboriginal languages in literacy, education, and research skills so that they could work on field research and development of their languages, including orthographies (MacKenzie 1985; Shkilnyk, 1986, pp. 64-65). Leap (1982a) provides a helpful insight on the role of non-Aboriginal linguists and other professionals in the current climate of local control over language resources and their development.

In an atmosphere of growing concern in Canada about literacy levels in English and French in the general population, a number of

studies commissioned by the Canadian federal and provincial governments on 'Aboriginal literacy' have dealt only with literacy in English and French among Aboriginal peoples (e.g., Rodriguez & Sawyer, 1990). The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs of the House of Commons (1990) has issued a report on `Aboriginal literacy' that addresses Aboriginal language (but not literacy) and culture as one thing and literacy in English and French among Aboriginal peoples as another with some tenuous connections between them. This kind of stance needs to be counteracted in policy development.

Other Areas of Aboriginal Language Development

A broad spectrum of Aboriginal language activities has been noted under the heading of education, but others outside of schools remain to be considered. The AFN 1990 survey collected information about language used in the sample communities in everyday conversation, cultural ceremonies, churches, radio and television, government reports, community meetings, and the justice system (p. 21). When the results were broken down by level of fluency in the Aboriginal language in the community, it is clear that those communities which had the highest levels of fluency were those with the most Aboriginal language services (e.g., newspapers, radio/television, community meetings, government publications, and in the justice system)(p. 33). The AFN made recommendations about community and school Aboriginal language development activities designed for the levels of fluency in different communities (pp. 33-34). The Statistics Canada survey (1993) shows similar data on print and electronic media use, language use at work, and access to health, social or legal services in Aboriginal languages (Table 2.1).

Further research and discussion of Aboriginal language development outside of school contexts appear in White (1983, 1984) on activities in the Walpole Island community, and Burnaby (1984) on a broad range of Aboriginal language undertakings and resources in Ontario. Finally, returning to the family as a central institution in language maintenance, Upper and McKay (1987) provide rare data on the language development of a child growing up in an Oji-Cree speaking family.

Aboriginal Language Maintenance in Other Countries

The report on the AFN survey (1990) included a brief literature review about Aboriginal language developments in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand (pp. 6-9). Beyond broad descriptions of policies and programs, it is difficult to work out what might be comparable and what might not between these countries and Canada. The clearest point is that Australia has lost a much higher proportion of its original

Aboriginal languages than Canada has. MacPherson (1991), in reviewing Aboriginal education in Canada from an administrative and legislative perspective, also did a quick review of comparable experience in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. He concludes that the situation for Australian Aboriginal peoples is "truly abysmal" (p. 15) and that "the actual operation of Indian education systems in the United States is quite poor, just as it is in Canada" (p. 17). He is more enthusiastic, however, about the language and cultural potential of the Kohanga Reo ('language nests' or community language preschools) in New Zealand (p. 14) and suggests that Canada study that approach (p.44). Benton (1978, 1981) provided a detailed description of language education for indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia, and Micronesia. He notes the colonial influence of both France and Great Britain in the area. New Zealand differs somewhat from the others in that at least token recognition of Maori has been made. In a 1986 article, he describes the rapid development of the Kohanga Reo since their inception in 1982. Finally, Jordan (1988) has written a complex description of educational policies for Canadian Aboriginal peoples, the Sami, and Australian Aborigines. Identity and self-determination are more in focus than language, but the background history and social struggles are important for comparing the three groups of people.

Conclusions

In light of the complexity of information so briefly reported on here, drawing conclusions is not easy. However, four points seem to arise from the positions taken in the material reviewed. One is that, no matter what the circumstances, the Aboriginal community must be the central decision maker in any initiative on Aboriginal language maintenance. This requirement is challenging given that it appears that there is a considerable difference of opinion on important matters in many Aboriginal communities to say nothing of the complexity of bureaucratic jurisdiction for Aboriginal education. Secondly, there is always a complex of issues to be resolved in Aboriginal communities, the maintenance of the Aboriginal language perhaps being only one of many strongly valued priorities. The consolation is that, if programs for Aboriginal language maintenance fail, other important goals may still be achieved through the effort. Third, the support of the majority culture, and particularly policy makers, is essential in making Aboriginal language policies work. Fighting institutionalized discrimination requires a major, directed effort. Finally, a lot of work needs to be done for each of Canada's Aboriginal languages in terms of language research, language resource development, teaching materials development, teacher training and the training of other relevant language resource people, curriculum development that really reflects the interests

of the community, orthography development and implementation, community activities that support the use of the language, and other endeavors. If the community is willing to include them, there are useful roles for school officials and academics to play in this process, but community control is paramount.

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